LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

unit guide

BSc (Hons) Degree in Psychology
BA/BSc Combined Honours Degree – Psychology Field

2007/2008

Semester 2

Psychological Research Methods 4
PSY-2-RM4

https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/psycho/teaching/rm4-main.shtml

Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
Department of Psychology

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Unit Details

Unit Title:	Psychological Research Methods 4	
Unit Level:	2	
Unit Reference Number:	TPS-2-214	
Credit Value:	1	
Student Study Hours:	150	
Contact Hours:	48	
Private Study Hours:	102	
Pre-requisite Learning (If applicable):	Psychological Research Methods 3	
Co-requisite Units (If applicable):	None	
Course(s):	Psychology	
Year and Semester	Year 2, Semester 2	
Unit Coordinator:	Dr Elizabeth Newton	
UC Contact Details (Tel, Email, Room)	Email: newtone3@lsbu.ac.uk, Room BR-E – 343C	
Subject Area:	Psychology	
Summary of Assessment Method:	1,500 word Experimental Report	30%
	1,500 word Qualitative Report	30%
	1,500 word Mini Project Report	40%

Teaching Team

Block	**Experimental**	**Qualitative**	**Mini-Project**
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1.0 SHORT DESCRIPTION

This unit provides students with the opportunity to develop their research methods skills via a computer based experimental study, a qualitative study and, working in groups, a mini project in an area of their choice. In the experimental study they will learn how to use experiment generator software. In the qualitative study they will learn how to carry out discourse analysis. In the miniproject they will get their first opportunity to investigate an idea of their own choosing using a methodology of their own choosing. The skills and independence students learn during these practicals will help students prepare for their final year project.

2.0 AIMS OF THE UNIT

This unit aims to:

- provide students with the opportunity to explore in depth some important contemporary research methods
- provide students with the opportunity to design, implement and write-up investigations using these methods
- provide students with the opportunity to reflect critically upon the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods

- provide students with the opportunity to explore critically the theoretical ideas that underpin the research methods discussed
- review issues in experimental design and inferential statistics

3.0 LEARNING OUTCOMES

3.1 Knowledge, Understanding and Intellectual Skills

At the end of the unit, students will demonstrate that they are able to:

- Understand and evaluate the principles that underpin selected investigative methods in psychology.
- Understand and evaluate the methods of data collections used in the investigations
- Understand and evaluate the analysis of data collected
- Write up the results of practical work in a format specified by learned journals.
- Evaluate the results obtained and how they relate to the literature
- Integrate across multiple perspectives and recognise distinctive approaches
- Employ evidence based reasoning and examine the issues associated with different approaches (in practical work / qualitative analyses)

3.2 Practical Skills

- Manage practical investigations to completion.
- Be proficient in the use of the Superlab experiment generator to create a simple computer based experiment.
- Use, interpret and present results of research using inferential statistics in SPSS.
- Retrieve and/or organise information effectively e.g. from electronic sources.
- Analyse data using quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.3 Transferable Skills

This unit will give students the opportunity to develop:

- Research design.
- Implementation of experimental designs in an IT setting.
- Project management.
- Data collection and analysis.
- Report writing.
- Critical thinking.
- Communicate effectively using written language
- Be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors (practical / conceptual)

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

1. 1,500 word experimental psychology report (30%)
2. 1,500 word qualitative psychology report (30%)
3. 1,500 word mini project report (40%)

Rationale for assessments 1 & 2.
To continue to develop the fundamental skills of practical report writing and critical analysis in the context of two contrasting approaches to the study of psychological processes (Qualitative and Quantitative analyses). Each of these requires students to have a secure understanding of the conceptual, methodological and analytical basis of the given methodology.

Rationale for assessment 3.
To assess the ability to work in groups, with supervision, in the construction, implementation, analysis and report of an empirical investigation.

4.1 Notes about submitting coursework

Coursework deadlines are published in Course/Field Guides and on Psychology notice boards. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are aware of these dates. All coursework must be submitted to the AHS Faculty Office in Borough Road (B266).

1. When handing in coursework, you must:

   - complete the coursework submission form and attach it to the front of your coursework;
   - take the coursework to the Faculty Office. Your submission form will be date stamped and a receipt issued. Please keep all receipts;
   - keep a copy of your report.

You must not hand coursework to your unit co-ordinator or other lecturer.

2. Unless you have obtained a formal extension from your year tutor, coursework submitted:

   - up to two weeks after the deadline date will receive a maximum mark of the pass mark (40%);
   - more than two weeks after the deadline will not be marked.

3. Extensions are only granted for valid reasons (see Course/Field guide). The Year Tutor will normally require concrete evidence (e.g. medical certificate). If you want an extension of the deadline date, you must:

   - get a copy of the form for late submission from the Faculty Office;
   - fill in Part A of the form, giving reasons why you cannot meet the existing deadline date;
   - supply the Year Tutor with relevant documentary evidence;
   - submit the form to the Year Tutor who will fill in Part B – the decision whether to agree the request rests with the Year Tutor;
   - attach the form to the front of your coursework when you submit it (keep a copy for your records);
   - each extension form is only valid for one piece of coursework;
   - the maximum extension is two weeks.

   Students should note that extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances. In order for an illness or other personal problem to be accepted as grounds for an extension, the Year Tutor will need to be convinced that the problem occurred at such a time, and was of such a duration, that a student's ability to complete the assignment to the best of their ability was significantly reduced.

Coursework should be submitted in the way specified. Occasionally, individual students may be asked, in writing, to also provide an electronic copy. Failure to supply electronic copy within **two weeks** of a written request will result in the coursework being deemed as an incomplete submission, hence given a mark of **zero**.

5.0 FEEDBACK

There are three practical reports to submit. In each case these will be returned within 20 working days of submission. Each report should have feedback of two kinds. First, on the script the marker will comment on the contents of the report and these comments will tend to be quite specific in nature. Second, on the report mark sheet the marker will give ratings of each aspect of the report as well as comments about the sections. IF YOU WANT YOUR SCRIPT WITH FEEDBACK RETURNED YOU MUST SUBMIT TWO COPIES OF YOUR REPORT.

6.0 INTRODUCTION TO STUDYING THE UNIT

6.1 Overview of the Main Content

This unit consists of three investigations. The first two are closely specified and give you the opportunity to learn to use experiment generator software and an advanced qualitative method, respectively. The third provides students with the opportunity to work in groups on an investigation of their own choosing.

6.2 Overview of Types of Classes

This will vary depending upon the particular block. It is expected that this unit will be predominantly student led with tutors providing guidance. However to facilitate this objective each block will have at least one lecture on the design, execution and analysis of your investigation.

The sessions are all on Friday afternoons starting *promptly* at 1.15 p.m. However, the precise nature of the sessions will depend upon the activity that is timetabled (see next page).

Students must ensure that they have a username and password from the Learning Resources Centre (LRC) or another email address so that they can communicate with tutors.

6.3 Importance of Student Self-Managed Learning Time

As this unit will introduce psychological research methods which are both diverse and intricate (qualitative methods and computer based experimental design) it is important that students spend their time outside of taught sessions, reading, reflecting and considering the issues. To aid in this students are directed to the preparatory reading lists provided for each of the individual components (See section 7.0). Furthermore, these preparatory issues are particularly important for the completion of the mini-project which should be viewed as an opportunity to develop the independence required for the final year project.

6.4 Employability

The skills you will learn in this unit will contribute significantly toward your employability. For the mini project you will be required to work independently using your own self directed planning and initiative to complete a competent piece of original work. Employers value these skills, especially in the area of management and academia, because they show you are competent to work unsupervised. Furthermore, throughout all the three components of this unit you will develop your critical thinking and inferential skills which are fundamentally important for employers who require their staff to produce original, creative and rigorously thought-out solutions to complex and challenging problems.

7.0 THE PROGRAMME OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Unit Timetable

Week	***Unless told otherwise meet at 1:00 for lecture then seminars from 14:00 to 17:00***
1	Introduction & Practical Session 1 (Experiment)
2	Review & Practical Session 2 (Experiment Construction)
3	Data Handling, Analysis and Interpretation Practical Session 3 (Experiment Construction)
4	Qualitative research: epistemological issues
5	Analysing qualitative data I: Grounded theory
6	Analysing qualitative data II: Discourse analysis
7	Overall aims of Mini Project & Practical Session
	EASTER BREAK
8	Review and Practical Session
9	Review and Practical Session
10	Review and Practical Session
11	Preparation for Assessment
12	No session

Week One (13:00 to 13:15)

Introduction - Overview of Psychological Research Methods 4
Aims:

- To provide an overview of the unit's aims, objectives and learning outcomes.
- To describe the rationale for assessment and link it to the core learning outcomes for each block.
- To provide an overview of the types of learning environments utilised during the unit (lectures, seminars, independent learning etc.).
- To outline the schedule of work and assessment for the unit and importance of consistent attendance.

Learning outcomes:

- Students will be aware of the working of the unit and the rationale for the three components.

Experimental Block

The aim of this series of workshops is to enable students to develop research skills in an experimental capacity based on a variation of the Stroop task. The sessions will be based around the experimental generator Superlab (V2.4).

Students will be allocated into one of four groups A, B, C, D and will be required to attend at the times specified in the first session.

Overall aims of the 'experimental' sessions:

- Students will have detailed knowledge of a particular research study and an understanding of the context for that piece of research
- Students will have practical experience of carrying out a study in cognitive psychology, performing the analysis and completing the write-up of a research report

Please Ensure:

- You attend at the allocated time / location for your group; failure to do so will result in you being sent away.
- You attend all sessions, as there will be no opportunity to catch up later.
- Students are required to have a completed experiment ready to collect data on the final session, (you may need to complete your work outside of the sessions above).

Week One (13:15 to 14:00)

Lecture

- Introduction to the Cognitive experimental sessions (Simon Noyce)
    - Overview of the next three weeks.
    - Background to the Stroop paradigm.
    - Overview of the methodological issues involved
- Mini Lecture (Tony Moss)
    - The modified Stroop and attentional bias.

Practical Session in the London Road 14:00 – 17:00

Aims:

- In the first part of these sessions students will be introduced to the nature of experimental research with particular emphasis on issues in good experimental design.
- To show students the importance of counterbalancing and the use of Latin squares in multi conditional experimental design.
- In the workshop, students will have the opportunity to discuss their allocated research in small groups with the aim of designing and constructing a study to test specific hypotheses in Superlab.
- Students will start to prepare the Stroop on Superlab

Learning Out Comes:

- Students will be aware of the relevant literature relating to the modified Stroop paradigm.
- Students will be able to plan their own Stroop, choose appropriate stimuli, and plan their experimental design to incorporate the appropriate methodological elements.
- Students will have experience of designing an experiment to test specific hypotheses using an experimental generator (Superlab).

Week Two

No Lecture this week

Practical Session in the London Road 13:15 – 17:00

Aims:

- Students will be able to work with the Superlab package and continue to build their own modified Stroop.

Learning Out Comes:

- Students will be familiar with the basic concepts required to implement a working experimental design within the framework of the experimental generator Superlab.

Week Three

Lecture from 13:00 to 14:00

- Mini Lecture on data handling (Simon Noyce)
- Mini Lecture on Statistical analysis (Simon Noyce)

Practical Session in the London Road 14:15 – 17:00

Aims:

- In the first part of these sessions students will be instructed on how to handle the raw data output generated by Superlab
- Students will be shown how to manipulate the data in excel and exp[ort it into SPSS
- Appropriate statistical analysis will be discussed along with write up requirements.

Learning Out Comes:

- Students will be able to:
  - Import a DAT file generated by Superlab into Excel.
  - Manipulate and recode their data in excel.
  - Import the clean data file into SPSS
  - Run the appropriate analysis in SPSS

Course Work:

- Submission of an experimental report with a clear focus on methodology and design.
- You will also be required to submit your completed experiment on the disk provided which will contribute to your final mark.

A student demo copy of Superlab can be obtained for use at home at http://www.Superlab.com/pro/demo.htm there is also a ten-minute guide in PDF format; it is strongly recommended that you review this manual before the session.

The web pages for the unit can be found at http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/psycho/teaching/rm4-experi-block.shtml one week prior to the first session.

References:

- References will be supplied in the handout.

Whilst attendance at all sessions of this Unit is essential, because most of the practical work is done in groups, special attention will be paid to attendance at this session.

Preparatory Reading

You should browse Denscombe (1998) to see the variety of research methods available to psychologists. In addition, you should read the references provided for each of the three blocks (See section 7.0)

Qualitative Block

Week 4: Qualitative Research
Aims:
To revise problems with quantitative research for understanding people
To understand the differences (and similarities) between quantitative and qualitative approaches
To consider the importance of reflexivity
To comprehend various types of qualitative research (approaches, methods, analyses)

Lecture Synopsis
In this lecture we will briefly revisit quantitative methods and their epistemological basis (positivism and the hypthetico-deductive method). We will remind ourselves of the criticisms that have been levelled at using these methods to study human behaviour and will consider the alternative of qualitative methods. There will be some time to remind ourselves of key differences between quantitative and qualitative approaches. The lecture will cover reflexivity in some depth as an alternative to the aims of objectivity in quantitative research. We will then consider some of the different philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research (little vs. big 'q' qualitative), and positivist vs. phenomenological vs. social constructionist stances. Standard methods and analytic techniques will be summarised briefly to be built on in subsequent weeks.

Seminar activity
The seminar will focus on student understandings of the different types of questions that are appropriate for quantitative and qualitative research. It will also take students through the process of designing a qualitative study, addressing the following questions for the question they have developed:
What qualitative method/s would you use to address this issue and why?
Who would your participants be and how would you access them?
How would you actually conduct the research?
What practical problems might you have conducting this research?
What ethical issues should you consider in the research?
How might you analyse & report the research (from what you know so far)?
Reflexively what assumptions might you bring to the research (at each stage) and how would you address these?

Learning Objectives
By the end of this week students should:
Understand what is expected from them for the qualitative component of the unit
Describe qualitative psychology and how it differs from quantitative psychology
Understand the importance of reflexivity
Be able to design a qualitative study

Key References
Banister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M. and Tindall, C. (1995). *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide.* Buckingham: OU Press.
Lyons, E. and Coyle, A. (2007). *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology.* London: Sage
Parker, I. (2005). *Qualitative Psychology: Introducing Radical Research.* Buckingham: OU Press.
Smith, J.A. (2008). *Qualitative Psychology*. London: Sage.
Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in Theory and Method.* Buckingham: OU press.

Week Five: Phenomenological Qualitative Analysis – Grounded Theory

Aims
To revise how to prepare material for analysis (transcription)
To understand what is meant by 'phenomenological' research
To comprehend the background to grounded theory
To be able to conduct grounded theory analysis

Lecture Synopsis
Rather than analysing data using pre-existing coding systems and statistics, qualitative researchers tape their interviews or focus groups and then transcribe (translate into written form) them. What the participants say is recorded word for word, without any censoring. This constitutes the TEXT. Psychologists using Grounded theory begin with a text and use this as the source of their analysis. They may also carry out further interviews with the same person as a result of their analysis of the initial interview transcript.
Grounded theory emerged from sociology. Instead of using data to support a theory (as in the hypothetic-deductive approach), two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss argued that researchers should suspend their preconceptions about what they might find and rely on the data itself to generate new theories. In other words, all new theories should be wholly 'grounded' in the data. Grounded theory is now used a great deal in clinical psychology, because clinicians recognised the need to include as much contextual information in their theory generation as possible. To provide a rich and full picture of the experiences of clinical patients, some clinical psychologists feel it is necessary to move away from abstract hypotheses and include as much 'conversational' data from their participants in order to generate a more authentic theory about mental distress.
In the lecture, we will charter the theoretical premises of Grounded theory as well as identify the methods of analysis – category formation. Grounded theory is a very systematic and careful process that follows a number of conventions that must be followed if a stringent analysis is to be achieved.

Seminar activity
In the seminar students will apply what they have learnt about grounded theory to some particular texts, following the process of line-by-line coding of the data, focused coding and categorisation. They will write memo definitions of categories and select key quotes which they would use if writing up their analysis.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this week students should:
Be able to transcribe data ready for analysis
Understand the phenomenological approach
Be able to conduct a grounded theory analysis of qualitative data

Key References
Langdridge, D. (2006). *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research and Method.* London: Prentice Hall.
Lyons, E. and Coyle, A. (2007). *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology.* London: Sage
Smith, J.A. (2008). *Qualitative Psychology*. London: Sage.
Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory.* London: Sage.

Week Six: Social Constructionist Data Analysis – Discourse Analysis

Aims
To understand what is meant by 'critical' psychology and the social constructionist approach
To comprehend the philosophy behind discourse analysis
To understand the different types of discourse analysis (micro and macro)
To be able to conduct discourse analysis

Lecture outline
Discourse analysis has grown out of social constructionism because of its focus on different 'versions' or 'constructions' of social/psychological reality. The greatest focus is on LANGUAGE and its function in social life. Rather than assuming that we can uncover only one 'reality' (which is how some positivists see it), discourse analysts argue there are a number of 'versions' to be found. Rather than assuming that people's discourse (language use) is a direct and unambiguous reference to their internal states (as in cognitive psychology) discourse analysts view language use as 'productive'. A number of philosophical debates have informed this approach to language (see Austin's speech act theory, Wittgenstein's philosophy and Foucault's studies of history and subjectivity). These philosophical positions question the basic premises of cognitive psychology, arguing that the relationships between language, perceptions and representation are not as straightforward as they appear in cognitive psychology.
When analysing 'discourse' (what people say), you are not interested in interpreting necessarily what the person 'really' thinks, you are just concerned with looking at what the language is actually 'doing' – what version of events is this person putting forward – a racist, sexist, homophobic one? In this, you are looking for the ways in which this person is 'putting together' or 'constructing' their version of reality. The lecture will cover the main steps of analysis for discourse analysis.

Seminar activity
In the seminar, students will use discourse analysis to analyse data from either Wooffitt's work on memories of the paranormal *or* Widdicombe's work on youth subcultures. They will apply what they have learnt in the lecture to come up with an analysis of the quotes.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this week students should:
Understand and apply social constructionist ideas
Comprehend discourse analysis and what it aims to do
Be able to conduct a discourse analysis of qualitative data

Key References
Burman, E. and Parker, I. (1993), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action.* London: Routledge.
Burr, V. (1995). *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.
Edwards, D. (1997), *Discourse and Cognition.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
Gergen, K. (1999). *An Invitation to Social Construction.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
Gough, B. & McFadden, M. (2001), *Critical Social Psychology: An Introduction.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.
Parker, I. and the Bolton Discourse Network (1999) *Critical Textwork: An Introduction to Varieties of Discourse and Analysis.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT

Choose EITHER Grounded theory or Discourse Analysis to analyse the transcript given to you. Choose only ONE method of analysis. Before presenting the analysis proper, write a rationale and summary of the theory behind the approach you have chosen and the practical steps involved in analysing the data (the actual stages of analysis, including colour coding and initial category formation should be included in the APPENDIX). The report must be no longer than 1,500 words. See chapter ten of the Banister (1995) book, entitled 'Report Writing' for further guidance. This assessment counts for one third of the overall unit mark.

The final report should comprise:

Structure of Report

Rationale of analytical approach (theory behind type of analysis – brief review of literature). 400 WORDS.
Outline of analytical procedure: breakdown of themes etc. 200 WORDS
Analysis proper, including extracts from data and Category headings. 800 WORDS.
Any concluding comments. 100 WORDS.

Although this report does not follow an experimental format, the headings, labels of categories and extracts must be clearly marked and signposted. The need for clarity, structure and evidence of careful analysis is just as important as it is for the writing of a quantitative report. Please refer to the marking guidelines specifically with reference to the write of a qualitative report.

Mini Project Block

Overall aims of Miniproject:

To provide students with the opportunity to design, execute, analyse and report an empirical investigation of their choice using a methodology of their choice
To help students develop an independent mode of study in preparation for the final year project

Week Seven

Aims of session:
To explain the purpose of this piece of practical work
To identify the milestones in the design, execution, analysis and report of this practical
To introduce the students to the types of practical work available
To introduce students to the staff available for supervision
To remind students of the regulations governing the design, execution, analysis and reporting of collaborative practical work
To remind students of the structure of the report required
To give students the opportunity to form working groups and decide on the type of investigation and potential supervisor

Lecture:
This session introduces this final component of the unit. The lecture will be used to explain how this practical gives you a final opportunity to enhance your their practical and report writing skills before you embark on your final year project. It will identify the milestones in the design, execution, analysis and report writing you need to be aware of and adhere to in order to submit a high quality piece of work on time. It will explain the constraints on the types of investigation you can do by practicalities such as having to work in groups, the equipment available and the supervisory arrangements in place, whilst still allowing you considerable freedom to develop ideas. Finally it will remind you of the rules and regulations of practical work, including ethical issues, and report writing which you have acquired over the last two tears.

Practical Session:
In this first session you will be given an initial opportunity to find colleagues with whom you want to work and to decide by the end of the session on the type of investigation you want to carry out e.g. qualitative, experimental with SuperLab, correlational, general experimental, etc. By the end of the session you should have formed yourself into groups, identified a general area of interest and spoken to a potential supervisor.

You should use the self-managed learning time between the sessions in week 7 and 8 to meet with your colleagues and discuss your ideas. Ideally, you should arrive at the session in week 8 with most of the details worked out and use the session simply to fine tune and get the approval of your supervisor.

Learning outcomes of session

At the end of this week you should:
Understand the purpose and requirements of the practical
Be able to identify the milestones in the design, execution, analysis and reporting of the practical
Have identified colleagues with whom you wish to work
Have identified a topic and potential supervisor

Week Eight

Lecture
We begin with a short review of progress and discussion of any generic problems

Practical Session only
By the end of this session you need to have arrived at a final decision about the study you want to carry out. You should have discussed this idea with your supervisor and you should have his/her consent that your idea is

plausible, practical and ethical. You should have identified the design of the study and, where appropriate, the equipment you need. You should, in short, have everything in preparation for carrying out the investigation. You will be responsible, as a group, for coordinating the collection of data and organising yourselves so that everyone contributes and knows what they have to do

Week Nine

Lecture
We begin with a short review of progress and discussion so far.

Practical Session
Ideally, the investigation should be carried out before the session in week 9. Where this is not achieved you should use this session to review progress and identify what needs to be done. The week 9 session could be used to discuss the data you collected and any problems you may have experienced doing it.

The Easter Break comes between weeks 9 and 10. This gives you plenty of opportunity to use your self-managed learning time to finish collecting your data, if you haven't already done so. As it is unlikely you will be able to meet your colleagues during this time it is essential that every member of the group knows what they have to do when they leave at the end of week 9.

Week Ten

Practical Session
This session should be used to assemble everything you need to write your report and to begin writing it. Your supervisor will be available to offer general advice on this.

Overall Learning outcomes of the miniproject

At the end of this miniproject you should:

Have successfully designed, executed, analysed and reported an empirical investigation of your choice
Learnt how to develop and idea of your own and how to work independently
Have a better understanding of the demands, problems and pitfalls of your final year project

Week Eleven
Tutors will be available in their rooms for advice.

Week Twelve
No sessions

8.0 LEARNING RESOURCES

8.1 Core Materials
Reading lists for each component are given in the appropriate section. Handouts will be provided by each section leader during the block. Basic materials for each block will be provided by the team responsible for the block. Information about the unit as well as handouts etc will be available on BlackBoard.

Liz Newton
Semester 2 2007-2008.